

GEORGIA FIREFIGHTER STANDARDS AND TRAINING COUNCIL

Recommended Practices for Fingerprinting Firefighter Candidates

Georgia Code 25-4-8 (a) (4) specifies that any person employed as a firefighter shall “be fingerprinted and a search made of local, state and national fingerprint files to disclose any criminal record.” Although this may be bothersome, there are good reasons for this law. Primarily, the issue is one of public trust. Members of the fire service have long been held in high esteem in the eyes of the public. Often this trust and esteem are necessary ingredients for firefighters to perform their jobs effectively. This Code is one method by which the fire service can maintain the level of confidence that they now realize. To assist fire departments in accomplishing this requirement, the following guidelines are suggested as a recommended practice.

- **The department should assign someone to perform the task of fingerprinting newly employed personnel to ensure that it is completed properly.**
- **Fire departments should contact the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) to obtain an ORI number.** ORI is an acronym for Originating Agency Identifier. An ORI number is assigned by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In this case, the ORI will be assigned to each requesting department for the purpose of submitting applicant fingerprint cards for national record checks. GCIC will make the request to the FBI on behalf of the local agency. To arrange to get an ORI number, contact GCIC at (404) 244-2639. The request should include the agency name, address, contact person and phone number. You should also indicate the approximate volume of fingerprint checks that will be submitted annually. Once the department has been issued its own ORI number, the FBI will provide the requested supply of fingerprint cards free. These cards will include the agency’s new ORI pre-stamped on the card. Using its own fingerprint cards ensures that the cards are returned directly to the fire department from both GCIC and the FBI. (The department can use the local law enforcement’s cards but information will be returned to the law enforcement agency, not to the fire department.)
- **Fire departments should make arrangements with their local law enforcement agency to assist in actually rolling (or taking) the fingerprints.**
- **The department must have two fingerprint cards made on each firefighter candidate.** Both cards must be sent to the Georgia Crime Information Center. The cards can be mailed to GCIC by either the fire department or local law enforcement agency. The GCIC will forward one card to the FBI upon completion of the state level processing. The cost to have the fingerprint cards processed for a state and national check is \$24.00.

According to the GCIC, it takes two – four weeks to process a fingerprint card. However, it will take two – four months for the FBI to process and return information. If the department hasn’t received the returned cards or information about the firefighter candidate within four months, they should contact GCIC at (404) 244-2639.

- **Once fingerprint cards are processed, the information (criminal history or lack of history) is returned to the agency whose ORI number is on the fingerprint card.** If the information is sent to the local law enforcement agency, the department must ensure that it is forwarded to the fire department. The GCIC returns the fingerprint card and if the firefighter candidate has a criminal history, the GCIC will also attach a printout of the offenses. The FBI will only return a printout either stating that “...the search on the individual has failed to disclose prior arrest data” or a listing of the criminal history. If the FBI search discloses criminal history, the FBI will also return the fingerprint card.



The department should study the information to verify that the candidate has no felony conviction. Since all criminal history on file (felony or not) for the individual is included in the report, it may be difficult to determine if it includes a felony conviction or a lesser offense. If the department has any questions in determining the nature of an identified offense, they should contact the local law enforcement agency or an attorney for assistance.

- ⇒ **A firefighter candidate that has been convicted of a felony within the previous 10 years is not eligible for employment or certification as a firefighter except for very specific exceptions as noted in Georgia Code 4-25-8-(a)-(2).**
- ⇒ **Criminal history reports (fingerprint cards and printed data) should be kept on file for future reference. For certification, the results should be included in the “certification package” and mailed to Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council.**